

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

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NFIB 78.1/2  
19 May 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Foreign Intelligence Board Members

SUBJECT: Foreign Language Capabilities

1. The Intelligence Community's Foreign Language Committee in March heard a presentation by a staff member of the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources concerning language initiatives. Her presentation began with an extraordinarily bleak review of foreign language studies in the United States. (C)

2. I forward the report on her presentation for your information in the belief that the data, particularly in paragraphs 2 and 3, are useful for our own internal planning within the Executive Branch and with the Congress. Members of the Intelligence Community, along with the Department of State, have the greatest vested interest within the Federal Government in the foreign language capabilities of the country's students. (C)

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Robert M. Gates

Attachment:  
As Stated

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DCI/ICS 86-3334  
29 APR 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director, Intelligence Community Staff

FROM: 

Chairman

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SUBJECT: Foreign Language Committee Monthly Report-March 1986

1. At the 31 March meeting, Ms. Lisa Phillips, Legislative Assistant to the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, addressed the Committee on "Language Initiatives in the 99th Congress".

2. In her opening remarks Ms. Phillips said that there are fewer than one million students enrolled in university-level foreign language courses and that most of these are in traditional four year liberal arts colleges. Only one community college in the nation requires any foreign language study---significant because 40 percent of all college freshmen are at community colleges. We are the only nation where a student may receive a Ph.D. degree with no foreign language skill. Only four percent of high school graduates have taken at least four semesters of foreign language training; only 14 percent of high school graduates who enter colleges and universities have had such training. Sixty percent of college students receiving foreign language study either French or Spanish; 3.1 percent Russian; 1.6 percent Japanese; 1.3 percent Chinese; and .3 percent Arabic.

3. The record on exchanges is equally dismal. There are some 20,000 Chinese speakers visiting the United States from both the PRC and Taiwan but only 69 Americans training in China; there are 11,000 Japanese studying here but only 634 Americans training in Japan. The statistics for the Soviet Union are, of course, skewed because of political considerations; there are 343 Soviet students in the United States but no American students in the Soviet Union. Although there are some 10,000 Japanese businessmen in the United States fluent in English there are no more than 100 American business people in Japan with a working knowledge of the Japanese language.

4. Title 6 of the Higher Education Act provides the most comprehensive civilian program of established resource centers for area and language studies. With a current funding level of \$26 million, 93 centers representing all geopolitical and linguistic areas of the world are supported at many university campuses both to provide resources for information and to train area specialists. In recent actions in the Senate, with the work of

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Senators Simon, Stafford, Quayle, and Dodd, an additional \$10 million has been added to this program and a new initiative has been included for intensive summer language institutes for secondary school language teachers and language teachers at the college level. The bill goes before the full Senate next month and a House-Senate conference is expected this summer. Provisions mentioned above are expected to be approved. The language institutes are part of the Simon Foreign Language bill (S. 1631). Other parts of S.1631 have been included in the proposed Comprehensive Trade Reform Bill by Senator Hart. While this is unlikely to pass, the inclusion of foreign language training assistance in a trade bill is an acknowledgment of the importance of speaking another language, and efforts will continue to include language training in trade and other relevant legislation. The specifics of programs in the Hart bill are block grants to states for improving language instruction at the elementary and secondary level. A minimum of \$225,000 would be provided each state with additional funds based on population. Some of the larger states under this formula would receive as much as \$1 million.

5. Among the most far thinking programs in foreign language training are those at the state level and in private industry. For example, Chase Manhattan Bank has begun recruiting entry level professionals at schools of international affairs and language schools rather than the traditional MBA student. Business schools themselves are slowly moving to internationalize their programs--Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania is one of the best examples where a student receives jointly an MBA and a Masters degree in international affairs or foreign language.

6. The Chief State School Officers, representing all state school superintendents, has just issued a report calling for internationalization of elementary and secondary school curricula. At the same time, the Conference of Southern Governors, under the direction of Virginia Governor Baliles, has created a task force on foreign language education in the public schools. Tightened college language requirements will induce states to broaden foreign language offerings and requirements for high school students. The California State University system, for example, beginning in 1988, will require two years of language study for admission. At the end of the decade, New York will have the same requirement for an academic high school diploma.

7. Other states are beginning experimental programs in foreign language. Illinois authorized fundraising for an experimental public residential high school in languages; individual school districts are implementing language programs such as a Chicago elementary school which offers Japanese in grades 1-6. The economic incentives are clear. The recent contract for a new Japanese motor plant in Rockford, Illinois, was decided, in part, because the local high school offered Japanese language classes.

8. Efforts to include foreign languages in school curricula are coming from two directions--top down and bottom up. With business choosing students with language capabilities for jobs, the student is likely to pursue some language training in college or graduate school. With colleges requiring language training for entrance, high schools are encouraged to offer and require languages for graduation. From the bottom up, involved parents and individual schools with programs such as the Chicago Japanese elementary school, will put pressure on high schools to continue the foreign language training students began at an early level.

9. Projections for the future of Congressional actions fall into several categories:

a. The Language Competent Embassy program, begun experimentally at US Embassies in Uruguay and Senegal, will be continued either at the direction of the State Department or through an amendment to the State Department Appropriations bill. Expansion of that program which requires all Embassy personnel to be conversant in the native language of the country will be slow and steady.

b. Legislation to authorize and appropriate funds for the Simon Foreign Language bill (S. 1631) will continue as amendments to existing legislation. One section--summer institutes--has already been accepted. Other sections will be considered over the next eighteen months.

c. Funding is being sought for an expanded exchange program between US colleges and universities, and institutions in other nations. Among possible sources are existing revolving funds in various education laws--such as the College Housing Loan Program which totals between \$27 and \$30 million per annum in repayments. Repayments funds from revolving accounts are part of the portfolio of the Secretary of the Treasury, and there are legislative difficulties in tapping these funds. An initial amendment to the higher Education Act offered in the Senate on March 19th by Senator Simon was defeated. That amendment would have taken the college housing loan repayments and redirected them to international exchange programs.

10. The concept of using revolving accounts, however, is still the most practical way to proceed. Because these items are "off budget", that is, they do not fall under the various budget restrictions in Congressional Budget Resolutions, they are the only source of funding that does not reflect "new money". New initiatives will have an extremely tough time garnering approval in a fiscally conservative climate. Among the more ambitious proposals which will develop over the coming year is use of outstanding military sales credits in the form of loan forgiveness in return for the debtor nation providing student and faculty positions at that nation's national university. Repayment would be in-country, in currency. Legislation developing this idea will be prepared in the coming year. Outstanding credits have averaged about \$13 billion a year, and reside in the portfolio of the Secretary of Treasury.

11. Direct implications for the Intelligence Community focus primarily on language competent individuals produced by the school system and university system before beginning a career. Training opportunities, however, can be seen in an expanded educational system, particularly the proposed long-term relationship with national universities of debtor nations.

12. When thanking Ms. Phillips for her presentation, the Chairman said that the Executive Secretary would be pleased to act as a conduit for any correspondence between Ms. Phillips and the FLC.



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